**Interview of Sarah Stover on her experiences with education…**

1. **When did you first know that you wanted to be a teacher?**

Ever since I was a little girl, I loved playing "teacher." I would convince my younger brother and sister to sit on a rug in our unfinished basement while I stood at my chalkboard to teach them all sorts of things including math, art, or sometimes spelling. They would sit there with their little notebooks and complain most of the time, but there were times when I felt like an actual teacher standing up there. And ever since I was little, I've always thought about going to school to become a teacher. There were times when I thought I'd be something else, but I always came back to the idea of being a teacher. There was no one moment that I really knew that teaching was what I wanted to do, but I think my parents were really the ones who showed me that teaching was the perfect fit for me.

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1. **How did your parents influence your decision to be a teacher?**

My dad is a high school math teacher, and my mom was a special education teacher. They came home every day with stories about the good, bad, and silly things their students did that day. They would talk to one another about how proud they were of certain students, and ask each other about how to help other students. They were dedicated, and they fought for their students.

1. **What do you mean by “they fought for their students?”**

Well, many of my mom's students were from broken homes and many of them never thought they could go far because they had a learning disability. What was great about my mom was that she was a tough teacher. She expected them to do their best at all times, and I know for a fact that she changed the lives of her students.

1. **Can you give us an example of this?**

One time I met one of her students, one who had graduated from high school about ten years ago. He told me that my mom was probably the best teacher he ever had because she taught him to look beyond his disability. "And look at me now," he said, "I own my own business." That's what I want to do - change lives. And I know that may sound extremely cliché, but it's true. My parents have always shown me the importance of education and the importance of teaching. I can't imagine myself doing anything else.

1. **So now you’re here at college working on your education degree. Could you tell us a little about what that’s like?**

Yes, here I am, at college, muddling my way through classes, late-night studying, THE PACKET, observations, and hours of homework to accomplish my goal of becoming a teacher. Some of the classes are painful, but for the most part, I'm having a good time. I love my education classes, and the packet's not as bad as I used to think it was.

1. **And what do you have to do for the packet?**

As part of the packet, we are required to do five days of observations at a high school. I spent one day in a high school Life Skills class, observing and working with students who have mild to severe disabilities. I chose to do so because even though I'm not a special education major, there is a high probability that I will have students with disabilities in my classroom.

1. **What did you do while you observed the classroom?**

On the day I was there, the students were learning skills such as vocabulary words, how to count money, how to fill out a check, and how to manage a checking account. They also went to a shop classroom where they were making clay pots. I spent the day talking to the students, helping them with their math, and working with them on their pots, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

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1. **What did you enjoy about it?**

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The students were so happy to be at school and were having a great time (especially with the clay pots). And I know all of my classrooms won’t be so cheerful, but this class reminded me why I'm doing what I'm doing. Sometimes I feel like I get so wrapped up in classes and grades that I forget that I'm here at college so that I can make a difference to my students in the future. The teacher in the class I observed was an amazing woman. She was teaching students with severe disabilities skills that will make them successful in their future. That is my goal as a teacher, to help my students be successful for their futures.

1. **How will you help your students be successful?**

I think an important thing to realize about education is that it is everywhere. You learn new things every day, even as a teacher. My goal would be to help my students to become open to the opportunities to learn around them and to take advantage of those opportunities. Clay P. Bedford said, “You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.” That’s what I hope to do for my students.

1. **You mentioned that even as a teacher you learn new things every day. Could you explain what you mean by that?**

My belief is that people learn different skills from a variety of people, not just school teachers. My siblings learned from me, I learned from my parents, and teachers learn from their students. Like I said before, education is everywhere. Learning is not only accomplished in a classroom.

1. **What do think you’re future will be like as a teacher?**

In the future, I imagine myself attending my students' graduation feeling proud of them and their accomplishments and excited for them to start the next step in their lives. I hope I will have made a difference in their lives or at least made an impression. I hope to see my students who had learning disabilities walk across that stage, knowing that they too have a bright future ahead of them, full of possibilities. Maybe a couple of students will come up to talk to me after graduation, thanking me for what I might have done. Or maybe, they'll email me from college, telling me that their math classes are so easy since they learned what they needed to know in my class. Maybe they'll come back to visit and update me on their lives. And maybe in twenty years I'll have their children sitting in my class, and I'll have a chance to inspire another generation of students.

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